

E-LABorations

Montana DPHHS Environmental Laboratory Updates

April 2010

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DPHHS ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY

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If you have events or stories to include in future issues please submit them by email to: Joel Felix
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Russell Leu

Environmental Laboratory Supervisor

The Montana State Laboratory Services Bureau welcomes **Russell Leu** as the new supervisor for the Environmental Lab. We feel fortunate to have Russell on board as he brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience gained through a diversity of assignments acquired during his many years working as a chemist.



After graduating from Jefferson High School in Boulder, Russell prepared himself for a career in chemistry by earning a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry and a Masters Degree in Biochemistry from Montana State University. He spent two years serving in the Peace Corps as a chemistry teacher in Bechem, Ghana and continued his humanitarian service for six years at the Eagle Mountain International Church in Fort Worth Texas. But, as most native Montanans do, this father of four returned to the Big Sky Country with his wife of 33 years.

He went on to apply his knowledge by spending 4 years as a QA technician for Pierce Packing, 12 years as a chemist in the Ag Lab, and then 4 years in the Department of Transportation where he rose to the position of chief chemist. Russell is excited about expanding his knowledge base once again as he assumes the supervisory role at the newly renovated State Environmental Laboratory.

Partnerships

Emerging Laboratory Roles

As part of the public health's terrorism and All hazards preparedness efforts, the Montana State Laboratory Services Bureau (LSB) is expected to accept and test unknown environmental samples. These samples which may contain biological, chemical, or radiological agents present the additional challenge of ensuring the safety of the lab and its personnel.



Felix Martinka BG(MT) Walsh

It is essential the lab develop a protocol to guide the triage, safe handling, and testing of potentially hazardous unknown environmental materials upon arrival at the lab. As we work to standardize procedures and provide a framework of steps to be followed during such a response it is also recognized that each incident may be scenario specific and the inherent risks unknown. Therefore the need to develop relationships, understand the capabilities of and train with first responders is essential as they may play an integral role in prescreening the samples before they are accepted by the lab.

Joel Felix and **Kathy Martinka** were recognized during recent ceremony at Fort Harrison for their efforts in building working relationships with the members of the 83rd Civil Support Team (CST). Relationships like these are sure to prove vital in ensuring an effective and coordinated response during an emergency event.

Link of Interest

Congress Works to Reform US Chemical Management

Both houses of Congress introduced legislation on April 15, 2010, that would overhaul the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976. The new legislation will give EPA more power to regulate the use of dangerous chemicals, and will require manufacturers to prove the safety of current chemicals as well as new chemicals seeking to enter the market.

<http://ehstoday.com/environment/news/congress-safe-chemicals-act-reform-management-9818/>

Events Calendar

MSAWWA/MWEA 2010 Annual Joint Conference

“Sustainability of Montana’s Water Resources”

Where: Hilton Garden Inn, Kalispell, MT
When: May 4-6, 2010
To Register: <http://www.montana-awwa.org/conference-registration/>

ERLN Application Deadline

When : June 25th 2010 is the new **EXTENDED** application deadline.

The Environmental Response Laboratory Network (ERLN) integrates capabilities of existing public sector laboratories with accredited private sector labs to support environmental responses.

Benefits of ERLN Membership

- Training and Exercise Opportunities
- Recognition as a Homeland Security Asset
- Improved Communications with Member Laboratories
- Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks (ICLN) Support

To learn more about membership and possible reimbursement opportunities go to the following link:
<http://www.epa.gov/erln/join.html>

Water is the one substance from which the earth can conceal nothing;
it sucks out its innermost secrets and brings them to our very lips.

JEAN GIRAUDOUX (1882-1944), The Madwomen of Chaillot, 1946